

WILD About Testing



Volume 1, Issue 11
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A newsletter aimed at certification professionals interested in continuously improving the certification experience for their certificants and other stakeholders (employers or government agencies that might use the certificate).

From the Editor

I wish all the readers of WILD About Testing the very best of the holiday season! As part of your Holiday and New Year ritual, I encourage each of you to take some time to reflect on how fortunate you are and how much opportunity is ahead.

We are fortunate to work in an industry that helps and protects. We help identify knowledge and skills required to perform effectively, we provide employees with credentials which improve their reward and recognition at work, we help employers by providing evidence about professional knowledge and skills, and we protect the public by providing credentials the public can use as independent verification of a person's expertise.

We are doing good! We have survived a tough economic year with seismic business shifts that are impacting the certification world. Yet here we are, having made it through one more year. So what are you planning for next year?

Remember, you cannot help others unless you help yourself. Invest in yourself and your development. Shout about your successes and the successes of your certificants. Kiss your significant other(s). Enjoy yourself and look forward to the future.

So, Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Holidays, and Happy New Year!

And welcome to the eleventh issue of WILD About Testing. I am delighted to report that during the eleven months of producing this e-zine I've learned three things. First, people really like and want information on improving quality in testing. Second, my colleagues are generously contributing ideas and content through interviews and on-line (right on my web site at www.wildandassociates.com). Please let me know what is on your mind and what you want me to write about next. The third thing I've

learned is that many more people would like to receive this information than are currently receiving it.

When I attend meetings or workshops, participants are excited to learn about my e-zine and wish they had heard about it sooner. You can help about this – with the new campaign – **Share the Wealth of Information.**

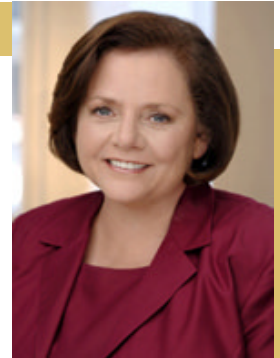
Why do I spend the time writing and distributing this newsletter?

I truly believe that certification and educational testing are critical parts of everyone's lives. In school, tests are used for grades, for placement, and for helping you understand what you know (and what you don't know). As consumers, we depend on certifications and licenses as a way of indicating that the doctors, lawyers, accountants and many others we employ have the basic knowledge and training needed to provide those services.

And we use certifications as ways of bolstering our credentials and improving our work prospects.

Because testing is so much a part of our lives, **everyone** believes they can develop a test – after all, we have all taken tests for years in school and anyone can ask a question!

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Dr. Cheryl Wild
President
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In the certification field, many certifications are begun by zealots in the field – people who know the subject matter of the certification and believe strongly in the need for certification, but may have no psychometric or process management expertise. That is fine, if the founders understand what they don't know and obtain the expertise elsewhere. **Although tests can do good, they can also do harm.** Not everyone in the certification field understands the need for sound psychometric development of tests and the application process management to assure fair, valid and reliable test results.

I write **WILD About Testing** because I want every certification professional to have the opportunity to learn techniques for producing certification programs that provide excellent benefits to their certificants and other stakeholders and to help avoid risks inherent in developing and delivering tests. Please help me share the wealth of information with others in the certification field.

How can you help Share the Wealth of Information?

I am working hard to make this e-zine relevant and useful. But this information is only useful if others receive and read it. You can help in two ways. Please click the "Forward to a Friend" button on the bottom of the e-mail that brings each issue to you, or just spread the word and ask them to go to my web site and subscribe. Second, please continue to help shape the e-zine by reader feedback. (Anyone who would like to provide additional feedback may go to www.wildandassociates.com to help with the design of future issues.)

What is in this month's issue?

The ICE conference was fabulous, and this issue summarizes some of the workshops that dealt with creating exceptional certification programs.

This issue also announces a change in dates for the ***Improving the Quality of Your Certification Program: A Learning and Planning Retreat*** which I will be holding at the Jersey shore in September and October and in Longboat Key, Florida in January, February, and March of 2011. This is a quick way to learn about quality tools and plan how to apply them to your organization.

Defining the Profession describes common mistakes that new certification organizations make in defining

the scope of the profession. How can it be done correctly? The Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI) is avoiding these problems – read the description to see how they are doing this.

Enjoy the newsletter and share it with your colleagues. Please use the "Forward to a Friend" link and help me reach out and find everyone who can benefit from years of great experience, which I am delighted to share.

Rescheduling "Improving the Quality of Your Certification" Workshops

I was gratified at the ICE meeting to learn of all the interest in the ***Improving the Quality of Your Certification Program: A Learning and Planning Retreat*** in Florida.

Those of you who asked if we could conduct such a workshop for your management team – the answer is yes! Customizing the workshop would indeed provide a real bonus to your organization.

Unfortunately, right before Thanksgiving, we learned that my husband has lung cancer. As of yet we are unsure what type of cancer, the treatment options or how long he has to live. My priority has to be with family for the next six months or so.

The good news is that September and October at the Jersey shore are gorgeous and we can have the workshop in the winter of 2011 in Longboat Key, Florida (my favorite winter spot in the whole world!).

Please keep the following dates in mind and let me know if you are interested!

September 16 – 17, 2010
 September 23 – 24, 2010
 October 14 – 15, 2010
 October 21 – 22, 2010

The Buzz at ICE!

The ICE conference was a great success. More than 500 attended and everyone's enthusiasm was contagious. The Second Edition of the ICE Handbook was hot off the press and available for attendees. More than anything else, I was impressed with the content of the sessions. Not only did the sessions discuss certification, they also focused on **how to create quality**.

You all know that my underlying belief is that certification requires sound psychometrics **and the use of process tools and techniques to assure quality services to your customers**. This year's conference seemed to broadly focus on the theme of quality.

The keynote speaker, Matthew May, author of *In Pursuit of Elegance*, kicked off the conference. His background in quality shined through the presentation! He talked about the seven deadly sins of problem solving and a process to neutralize them – a process that looks strikingly similar to Deming's "Plan-Do-Check-Act" cycle.

During the conference, I focused on sessions that had to do with accreditation. There was an excellent pre-conference workshop on NCCA and ISO 17024 Accreditation Standards and Success Stories. Elizabeth Grater, Jerry Reid, and Mary O'Neale spoke about the NCCA Standards, and Jim Kendzel, Joan Campbell, and Adrienne Segundo spoke about the ISO 17024 Standards.

Jim Kendzel indicated that 17024 includes the concept of a management system, which isn't included in NCCA Standards, but over all the standards are fairly consistent. He also pointed out that there is an ISO Standard for Accreditation Bodies (ISO 17011). This Standard requires on-site audits, which NCCA does not do. ANSI accredits organizations to the ISO 17024 Standard and does follow 17011. If there is demand in the marketplace, Jim indicated that NCCA could follow the 17011 Standard. The question is whether there is the demand in the marketplace.



*The ICE Handbook (2nd Edition) Editors:
Lynn Anderson, Joan Knapp, and Cheryl Wild*

Presenters suggested that the benefits of accreditation include the following:

- Helps sell your exam with regulatory bodies;
- Provides a competitive advantage;
- Forces you to keep your documentation accurate and up to date;
- Provides external eyes reviewing what you are doing and provides suggestions for improvement; and
- It isn't just about your examination – it also covers government, management, and recertification.

Both Joan Campbell and Adrienne Segundo indicated that there were real benefits to the site visit:

- Assessors were prepared and complimented staff on work well done; and
- Staff were proud of receiving 17024 accreditation because they were involved in the assessment and understood their contribution.



*NCCA and ISO 17024 Accreditation Standards and Best Practice Workshop presenters (left to right)
Jerry Reid, Mary O'Neale, Jim Kendzel, Joan Campbell, and Adrienne Segundo answer questions after the workshop.*

The Buzz at ICE! *(continued from page 3)*

On Friday, Jay Breyer, Roger Brauer, Michael Rosenfeld, and Austin Fossey conducted a session on **Continuous Improvement: Making Credential Programs Better**.

Although these speakers also discussed NCCA Standards and ISO 17024 Standards, Michael Rosenfeld also made an important point – **an internal audit can provide you with useful information, whether or not you are going for accreditation. It can provide a basis for continuous improvement and for improving services to your clients.**

Roger Brauer's organization has gone through four accreditations, and he indicated that every time you have different people look at your program, you have a chance to learn a new perspective and improve your services. **His organization has some rules for continuous improvement – one of which is that you never change anything alone. You don't know how this will impact someone else's work and you need to keep this in mind when making changes.**

Roger compared the NCCA and ISO 17024 Standards and indicated that each had their own strengths. He suggested that NCCA is strongest on exam matters, while ANSI adds international recognition and goes beyond certification basics to include quality standards. He also indicated that the on-site visits were valuable.

However, the panelists cautioned the audience that there are limitations to accreditation – it doesn't help innovate, doesn't do marketing, and doesn't help with standards for customer care. What you do after accreditation to add value to your program is important to success.

What did I conclude after going to the conference? The quality of certification programs is becoming recognized as an important contributor to its success. Certification professionals will benefit from learning more about creating quality tools – keep reading this e-zine to learn about opportunities to expand your knowledge!



Presenters (left to right) Roger Brauer, Mike Rosenfeld, Jay Breyer, and Austin Fossey pose after their session, Continuous Improvement: Making Credential Programs Better.

What Dr. Cheryl Wild brings as Test Improvement/ Process Consultant

Why do certification programs bring Dr. Cheryl Wild in to help them in designing a new certification program when they have also hired well respected groups like The Communicators and Advantus to work on their testing program? There are at least two reasons.

First, Dr. Wild can provide an independent review of the effectiveness of your contractors. Most new certification programs do not employ a full-time psychometrician, nor are they experts in quality tools for new product development. Even the best contractors have their own methods of certification development and are generally hired for only one part of the process. Dr. Wild can help evaluate the work, suggest other options, and help you navigate the technical jargon of the industry.

Second, Dr. Wild can suggest quality steps that need to be taken to assure the effective development of a certification program. Sometimes this can feel like tough love – she'll tell you that you really need to involve your stakeholders in the design process. It isn't enough to take the easy way out and ask your Board to do your job/task analysis. Developing a quality certification means understanding your stakeholders and their needs – and you can't do that without identifying them and including them in the development process.

Dr. Wild has been in the testing industry for 35 years and has worked on multiple programs and with multiple vendors. Not only is she an expert in testing, she is also an expert in quality and knows quality design, quality improvement, and quality control. She knows the importance of involving stakeholders and subject matter experts.

Feel free to call Dr. Wild to discuss whether her expertise could help you in the development or improvement of your certification program.

Defining the Profession – Common Mistakes and a Best Practice Example

Most certification professionals know that a job task analysis is the “tool” to use to create the test specifications for a profession. However, knowing the tool and implementing it successfully are two very different concepts.

What are some common mistakes in conducting the job task analysis for a new certification?

- Using the certification board to define the content.
- Failing to validate the job task analysis results on a broad sample of professionals.
- Failing to distinguish between what is minimal acceptable knowledge, and what would be expected of a long-term practitioner.

Why do new certifications take these shortcuts? In all three cases, it is often just the easiest way to proceed. Often, not understanding why it is important to define the field more broadly, new certification boards take the path of least effort – just do it themselves. In a new certification, it is sometimes difficult to know who the practitioners are. Instead of searching for practitioners, boards assume that if they build a certification, the practitioner will find the program. **Unless you identify practitioners and their needs, it is unlikely that the certification will be developed to meet all the needs in the field. You also miss the opportunity of getting the word out about your certification in advance.**

The Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI) is in the process of defining their profession as a basis for designing their certification and they are an example of how to do this correctly.

First, they determined that they want the job task analysis **to create a current definition of healthcare**

interpreting through an unbiased, scientific study. Now, this isn't easy because there is no single place to find information about the profession (as is often the case in a new certification). By doing research on the field, they identified characteristics of the field (including percentage weightings of the profession) on individual demographics (gender, age, race and education), career demographics (years of experience, career path, language acquisition and job title), and practice demographics (employer type, community density, geographic location, practice setting and language).

Then they selected the job task analysis panel to represent the individual, career and practice demographics of the field. The panel included relatively new practitioners as well as healthcare interpreters who had been in the field for more than 30 years. This allowed the panel to discuss what a new interpreter needs to know in order to conduct an interpretation session independently, versus what additional knowledge a more experienced interpreter may have.

Next, CCHI will conduct a survey of healthcare interpreters to identify what is most important to include in the certification. Again, they are not just going to survey the “easy to find” practitioners. The Communicators is developing a campaign to identify and enlist survey participants throughout the country and with a variety of background characteristics in order to have the highest possible validity for the survey.

Congratulations, CCHI, for choosing to develop the best possible certification in a complex industry!



Mara Youdelman, J.D., Chair of the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (attending her first NOCA Convention), and Cheryl Wild, Ph.D., networked with more than 500 other NOCA members participating in the annual meeting and recognition luncheon.



Conducting a great job task analysis task force meeting includes describing the event to the stakeholder community. Georgia Patrick and Cheryl Wild kibitz about ways of interpreting for the stakeholder community the fun the task force is having describing the work of a healthcare interpreter.

In The News



Congratulations to Dr. Nancy Peterson from ACT, who will receive the ATP Career Achievement award at the Florida ATP meeting.



Certification: The ICE Handbook (2nd Edition), edited by Joan Knapp, Lynn Anderson, and Cheryl Wild, is available from the Institute for Credentialing Excellence. **More than three years in the making, this is a must-have for any organization interested in a quality certification program.**

**ATP 2010 –
Meet me in Florida
in February
and learn more
about the
Certification Task
Force!**



Our break-out session, ***Fast Track Best Practice Assessment through Task Force Review***, has been accepted for the 11th Annual ATP Innovations in Testing Conference in Orlando and is tentatively slotted for Monday, February 8th at 4:30 PM.

This will be a great opportunity to hear Steven Barkley, Director of Examinations for the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, discuss how a Certification Task Force contributed to CFP Board organizational planning. Casey Marks (Chief Operating Officer of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing) and Colleen Anderson (Head of Exam Administration and Security for the CFA Institute) will discuss their experiences as task force members.

This panel will discuss the use of a task force to provide external program review, build buy-in for change, and educate volunteers (including council members). Panel members will also discuss the benefits to task force members' organizations. Procedures for planning and conducting an effective task force meeting will also be discussed.

An Invitation

Are you proud of the work you are doing internationally in certification?
Would you like to contribute ideas to a future article in WILD About Testing on this topic?

If so, please contact me at
cheryl@wildandassociates.com